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ASSOCIAÇÃO DE A[illegible]
PORTUGAL-TIMOR LESTE (A[illegible]PTL)
R. Pinheiro [illegible] sq.º
1000 [illegible]
Tele[illegible]

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QUESTION OF EAST TIMOR

Letter dated 17 September 1980 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you, herewith, the English version of the communiqué issued by the Government of Portugal on 12 September 1980, on the question of East Timor (see annex).

I would be grateful if Your Excellency could circulate the text of that communiqué as an official document of the General Assembly under item 85 of the agenda.

(Signed) Vasco FUTSCHER PEREIRA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Portugal
to the United Nations

ASSOCIAÇÃO DE AMIZADE
PORTUGAL-TIMOR LESTE (AAPTL)
R. Pinheiro Chagas, 77-2.º Esq.º
1000 Lisboa - Portugal
TEL. 52 47 18

Annex

COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS ON THE QUESTION OF EAST TIMOR ISSUED ON 12 SEPTEMBER 1980

Considering that it is morally, politically and legally incumbent upon Portugal to define a policy aimed at solving the problem of East Timor;

Considering that such definition had not been undertaken in the past, thus impairing the fulfillment of Portugal's obligations towards itself, the Timorese people and the international community;

Considering that the present constitutional Government had clearly stated in its programme that it would elaborate a policy regarding East Timor;

And considering that any such policy should focus on three fundamental levels, namely, an economic and social aid programme for the refugees of East Timor living in Portugal, on humanitarian aid to the Timorese inside East Timor, and at diplomatic level, on the political and legal status of the territory of East Timor;

The Council of Ministers, on a proposal of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, has decided, as of today, the following:

1. In so far as economic and social aid to the refugees of East Timor now living in Portugal is concerned, the Government hereby adopts an emergency aid programme which will also include the carrying out of housing projects already under way, sponsored by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Housing and Public Works; government aid for the launching of a project in poultry farming at the "Quinta da Conraria", through the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries; establishment of additional courses aimed at developing professional skills, especially among young Timorese adults, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labor; and the allocation of means to the Ministry of Education and Science to resolve pertinent problems in the sphere of education and school administration.

The Ministry of Social Affairs, through the Lisbon branch of the Committee on Social Security, shall create the mechanisms required for the rationalization and co-ordination of all aid given at present by the different departments and official institutions to the Timorese refugees in Portugal.

2. As for humanitarian aid to the Timorese living inside East Timor, Portugal will also in the future participate in the international relief programmes under way, namely through the supply of food, clothing and medicines. This contribution will be channelled through the United Nations, the International Red Cross and several Catholic organizations, and administered, within Portugal, by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Defence, on behalf of the Portuguese Red Cross.

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ASSOCIAÇÃO DE AMIZADE
PORTUGAL-TIMOR LESTE (AMPTL)
R. Pinheiro Chagas, 77 3.º Esq.º
1000 Lisboa - Portugal
Telef. 57 47 18

Portugal will also propose negotiations with Indonesia, on the understanding that these negotiations will not imply the recognition of the situation prevailing in East Timor, so as to discuss the humanitarian issues affecting the Portuguese citizens now in East Timor who wish to return to Portugal, as well as those Timorese who wish to leave the Territory under the family reunion programme. During these talks, due consideration will also be given to the problem of 65 Timorese who came to Portugal in 1975 and who now wish to return to East Timor.

It is also the intention of the Portuguese Government to enter into talks with the Governments of Australia, the United States of America, and eventually, with those of other friendly countries, so as to try to obtain special facilities for the admission of refugees and immigrants from Timor who may wish to settle in those countries, prompted by the desire to reunite with their families or for other purposes.

3. Lastly, and on the diplomatic level, the Portuguese Government remains faithful to its obligations and responsibilities regarding East Timor, that derive from international law and the Portuguese Constitution, and formally reaffirms the right of the Timorese people to self-determination.

Considering that the political problem of East Timor is of truly serious national concern to the Portuguese people, and bearing in mind that the policy to be adopted by Portugal regarding the political future of East Timor cannot fail to take into consideration both the views of the nationally representative movements of the Timorese people and the positions of the countries most directly concerned, the Portuguese Government will endeavour to hold wide consultations on this matter, both at home and abroad. These consultations shall be carried out:

- On the parliamentary level, where all political parties represented in the National Legislative Assembly will be asked to express their views;

- On the political level, taking into consideration the views expressed by all the nationally representative movements of the Timorese people;

- At the diplomatic level, through consultations with all the countries directly concerned with the solution of the problem of East Timor, namely Indonesia (with the understanding expressed in the previous paragraph), the United States, Australia, Japan, China, the Netherlands, the newly independent Portuguese-speaking countries, and the members of the European Economic Community.

After having carried out these consultations, the President of the Republic, in conjunction with the Government of Portugal, will, as laid down in the Portuguese Constitution, set the policies to be followed by Portugal.

4. The above-mentioned decision was forwarded for approval, on this date, to the President of the Republic, under article 307 No. 2 of the Constitution.